

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 007493
ORIGIN INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 /020 R

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APPROVED BY INR/DDR: M PACKMAN
INR/RSE: P K COOK
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-----130509Z 025394 /13

R 130041Z JAN 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO OIC PTC
INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 007493

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:

SUBJECT:

PASS FOLLOWING VIA THE NATO-WIDE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
RR RFWFA RFWFB RFWFD RFWFE RFWF F RFWFG RFWFH RFWFI RFWFK
RFWFL RFWFM RFWFN RFWFO RFWFP RFWFQ RFWFR RFWFZ
DE RFWFS #7493 0130137
ZNY CCCCC
130137Z JAN 77
FM WASHINGTON
TO AID 6006
AIG 6007
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NATO CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL FROM WASHINGTON

SUBJECT: SOVIET VIEWS ON THE PROSPECT FOR A SINO-SOVIET
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 007493

RECONCILIATION

1. THE HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE USSR AND CHINA IS PROFOUND,
ROOTED IN HISTORY AND IN NATIONAL RIVALRIES WHICH HAVE
BEEN AGGRAVATED BY IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT. THE INTENSITY OF
POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL COMPETITION OVER THE PAST 15
YEARS GREATLY DEEPENED A MISTRUST ALREADY EXISTING BETWEEN
THE TWO AND WILL HAMPER ANY EFFORTS TO PUT RELATIONS ON A
BETTER FOOTING. THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN
CHINA AND IMPENDING CHANGES IN THE SOVIET UNION MAY OFFER

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOME IMPROVEMENT IN STATE RELATIONS, BUT STEPS TO THAT END ARE LIKELY TO BE SLOW AT BEST. FEW SOVIETS EXPECT ANY SUBSTANTIAL RAPPROCHEMENT IN THE NEXT 5 TO 10 YEARS, ANTICIPATING AT THE MOST A MUTING OF HOSTILITIES.

2. NATIONAL RIVALRIES. DIPLOMATIC COMPETITION, PARTICULARLY IN ASIA, HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE POLICIES OF BOTH COUNTRIES. THE USSR IS DETERMINED TO ASSERT ITSELF AS AN ASIAN POWER, AND ITS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS ARE INTENDED BOTH TO GAIN A GREATER VOICE IN ASIAN AFFAIRS AND TO ISOLATE CHINA DIPLOMATICALLY.

3. IN PURSUING ITS ASIAN DIPLOMACY, MOSCOW SEES INTRINSIC VALUE IN CULTIVATING RELATIONS WITH JAPAN, INDIA, AND VIETNAM AND REGARDS CHINESE FEARS OF SOVIET ENCIRCLEMENT AS MOTIVATED BY A DESIRE TO DENY THE USSR THE GREAT-POWER ROLE IT HAS EARNED. THIS DIPLOMATIC COMPETITION, AND THE RANCOR THAT IT HAS GENERATED, ARE POWERFUL FORCES IN BOTH COUNTRIES AND WILL PRECLUDE A TRULY COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. IT WILL ALSO COMPLICATE ANY EFFORTS THAT THE TWO MIGHT MAKE IN THE FUTURE TO FIND A BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION.

4. A FACTOR DIFFICULT TO ASSESS YET CENTRAL TO SINO-CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 007493

SOVIET RELATIONS IS THE INHERENT ANTIPATHY BETWEEN RUSSIANS AND CHINESE. RACIAL ANTAGONISMS ARE RARELY FAR BELOW THE SURFACE IN MANY RUSSIANS, WHO STILL REGARD THE CHINESE AS LATTER DAY MONGOL HORDES WHO THREATEN A RETURN TO THE TATAR YOKE. AFTER YEARS OF CONTACT, MOSCOW IS WELL AWARE OF CHINESE DISDAIN FOR RUSSIAN "BARBARIANS," AN AWARENESS THAT PROBABLY INTENSIFIES SOVIET SUSPICIONS OF PEKING.

5. THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND IDEOLOGY. THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT WAS ONE OF THE MAJOR ARENAS IN WHICH THE INITIAL STAGES OF THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE WERE PLAYED OUT. IN THE INTERVENING YEARS, HOWEVER, THE MOVEMENT HAS CHANGED BEYOND RECOGNITION AND ITS IDEOLOGICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL UNITY HAS BEEN BADLY SHATTERED. AS A RESULT, THERE IS NO LONGER A SINGLE RECOGNIZED LEADER OF WORLD COMMUNISM, AS MOSCOW ONCE WAS OF THE COMINTERN AND THE COMINFORM. EVEN IDEOLOGICAL OR HISTORICAL PREEMINENCE IS A CONCEPT THAT IS RAPIDLY LOSING SIGNIFICANCE FOR MANY PARTIES, AND THERE IS FAR LESS TO COMPETE FOR WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT THAN THERE WAS TWO DECADES AGO. SIMILARLY, THERE IS NO LONGER A COMMONLY ACCEPTED BODY OF COMMUNIST STRATEGY AND TACTICS UPON WHICH THE USSR AND CHINA COULD AGREE AND WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A BROADER RECONCILIATION.

6. DESPITE THIS, THE IDEOLOGIES THAT ONCE GAVE LIFE TO THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE THE SOVIET VIEW OF THE WORLD SINCE MARXISM HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY ADAPTED TO NATIONAL ATTITUDES AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION. THIS FUSION HAS TENDED TO REINFORCE RUSSIAN TENDENCIES TOWARD ATTITUDES OF MORAL SUPERIORITY AND HAS CREATED YET ANOTHER GROUND FOR SUSPICION SINCE MOSCOW CONSIDERS THAT PEKING HAS DISTORTED AND PERVERTED MARXISM TO ITS OWN NARROW, NATIONALIST ENDS. SOVIET MARXISM WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE IN SHAPING MOSCOW'S VIEW OF CHINA AND WILL STRONGLY INFLUENCE DECISIONS ON THE FUTURE
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 007493

COURSE OF RELATIONS.

7. PROSPECTS FOR RECONCILIATION. BECAUSE CURRENT RELATIONS ARE THE RESULT OF HISTORICALLY AND IDEOLOGICALLY CONDITIONED PERCEPTIONS, THE SOVIET LEADERS CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND THAT SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN THESE RELATIONS WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT TO BRING ABOUT. FURTHER, ALTHOUGH SOME OBSERVERS CLAIM THAT STATE RELATIONS CAN BE IMPROVED WHILE PARTY RELATIONS REMAIN FROZEN, SINO-SOVIET RIVALRIES AND ANTAGONISMS WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO TREAT THE RELATIONSHIP IN A SEGMENTED MANNER SUCH AS SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS HAVE DEVELOPED. CHINESE POLITICAL COMPETITION IS VIEWED IN MOSCOW AS HAVING IDEOLOGICAL OVERTONES, AND IMPROVED STATE RELATIONS CAN HARDLY BE CARRIED VERY FAR AS LONG AS PARTY RELATIONS CONTINUE TO BE MARKED BY UNREMITTING HOSTILITY.

8. IN THE NEAR TERM, THE PRESENT SOVIET LEADERS APPEAR TO BE TOO OLD AND TOO CAUTIOUS TO VENTURE ONTO BOLD INITIATIVES OR TO BREAK OUT OF THE SHELL OF CUSTOMARY THINKING ON CHINA. IN FACT, THE STEPS WHICH THE USSR HAS TAKEN TOWARD CHINA SINCE MAO'S DEATH REFLECT THE COMPETITIVE URGE AND QUEST FOR SMALL GAIN WHICH HAS MARKED SOVIET BEHAVIOR TOWARD CHINA FOR THE PAST DECADE AND A HALF. THAT APPROACH IS LIKELY TO PERSIST AS LONG AS THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP REMAINS IN POWER.

9. OVER THE LONG RUN, HOWEVER, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A NEW GROUP OF SOVIET LEADERS MIGHT BE ABLE TO BREAK WITH THE PAST AND MAKE A FRESH EFFORT TO DEAL WITH THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF SINO-SOVIET FRICTION. SUCH A POLICY OF SEEKING A THOROUGH RECONCILIATION WITH PEKING WOULD REQUIRE NOTHING LESS THAN A FUNDAMENTAL REVISION OF MOSCOW'S CURRENT IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL VIEW OF CHINA. THE USSR NOW GENUINELY BELIEVES THAT CHINA IS A MAJOR ENEMY,

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 007493

AND IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO CHANGE THAT DEEP-SET BELIEF IN CHINESE ILL WILL AND HOSTILE INTENTIONS. WHILE SUCH A TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOVIET VIEW OF CHINA IS OF COURSE POSSIBLE, IT COULD ONLY COME ABOUT VERY SLOWLY AND HESITATINGLY.

10. OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED THAT IF THE WILL TO COMPROMISE EXISTED, THE BORDER QUESTION COULD BE SETTLED QUICKLY. AS IT IS, NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BORDER HAVE MADE LITTLE OR NO PROGRESS AND ARE UNLIKELY TO DO SO UNTIL THE TWO NATIONS CAN REDUCE THEIR MUTUAL MISTRUST AND SUSPICION. THUS, MOSCOW IS UNLIKELY TO ACCEDE TO CHINESE DEMANDS FOR A TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM THE FRONTIER UNTIL IT IS CONFIDENT THAT PEKING WILL NOT PROVOKE NEW BORDER INCIDENTS OR ATTEMPT TO SEIZE TERRITORY LABELED AS "DISPUTED." THIS CONFIDENCE, IN TURN, CAN ONLY BE NURTURED OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME AND CAN ONLY SLOWLY REPLACE THE CURRENT DEEP-SEATED HOSTILITY.

11. A MUTING OF HOSTILITIES. THE SOVIET LEADERS APPEAR TO RECOGNIZE THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN RESTORING SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS TO A LEVEL ANYWHERE NEAR THAT OF THE 1950'S, AND FEW IF ANY SOVIET OBSERVERS EXPECT THAT THIS TASK COULD EVER BE ACCOMPLISHED. GIVEN THESE PROBLEMS, A MORE LIKELY SOVIET OBJECTIVE IN THE COMING MONTHS AND YEARS IS THAT OF AN ALTERATION OF THE FORMS IN WHICH ANTAGONISMS ARE EXPRESSED. MOSCOW CLEARLY SEES THAT ITS INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED AND NONE OF ITS PRINCIPLES COMPROMISED BY EFFORTS TO EASE OR EVEN END PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS OF HOSTILITY. THE SOVIET UNION SUSPENDED ITS ATTACKS ON CHINA IN THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA AND IN PUBLIC FORUMS FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF MAO AND PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE ITS FORBEARANCE FOR MANY MONTHS. IT MAY ALSO OFFER TO EXPAND SOME ASPECTS OF STATE RELATIONS, SUCH AS TRADE AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES. STEPS OF THIS NATURE WOULD DEAL WITH APPEARANCES RATHER THAN SUBSTANCE, BUT THEY CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 06 STATE 007493

WOULD HELP CREATE THE IMPRESSION OF SOVIET GOOD WILL AND OF MOMENTUM TOWARD A SUBSTANTIVE IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS.

12. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD BE ATTRACTIVE TO THE SOVIET LEADERS FOR MANY OF THE SAME REASONS THAT ENCOURAGED THE WESTERN POLICY OF CONTAINMENT AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR. UNDER THIS POLICY, THE SOVIET LEADERS WOULD CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A STRONG MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE BORDER, THUS DETERRING AGGRESSION, AND WOULD CONTINUE TO COMPETE WITH CHINA DIPLOMATICALLY IN ASIA AND ELSEWHERE IN ORDER TO CURTAIL CHINESE INFLUENCE. IN COMBINING RESTRAINT WITH PRESSURE, MOSCOW WOULD HOPE THAT, AFTER THE POST-MAO

SUCCESSION IS FINALLY SETTLED, THE NEW CHINESE LEADERS

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WOULD LOSE SOME OF THEIR MAOIST FERVOR AND BEGIN TO
PERCEIVE ADVANTAGES IN EXPANDING CONTACTS WITH THE
SOVIET UNION.

13. THE USSR PROBABLY CALCULATES THAT AS CHINA BECOMES
STRONGER ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY, IT MAY BECOME MORE
CONFIDENT OF ITS ABILITY TO MANEUVER BETWEEN THE SUPER-
POWERS, EXTRACTING GAINS FROM BOTH BY DEALING WITH BOTH ON
A BROAD BASIS. ALTHOUGH SUCH A RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA
WOULD CONTINUE TO BE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND MARKED BY
SUSPICION, IT WOULD BE FAR MORE TO THE SOVIET INTEREST
THAN THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, BOTH IN TERMS OF
LESSENING THE CHANCES OF WAR WITH CHINA AND OF LOOSENING
CHINESE TIES WITH THE US. THUS THE SOVIET LEADERS WOULD
WANT TO PROVIDE PEKING WITH INCENTIVES FOR MUTING HOSTILI-
TIES WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, KEEPING UP THEIR GUARD AND
OPPOSING THE EXPANSION OF CHINESE POLITICAL INFLUENCE.

14. OUTSIDE PRESSURES. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THEN,
MOSCOW PROBABLY CALCULATES THAT ITS FUTURE RELATIONS WITH
CHINA WILL AT BEST BE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE, AND RECOGNIZES
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 07 STATE 007493

THAT THE CAUSES OF THIS COMPETITION ARE TOO COMPLEX AND
MANIFOLD TO BE OVERCOME IN ANYTHING LESS THAN THE VERY
LONG TERM. IN ASSESSING THEIR OWN INTERESTS AND THOSE OF
PEKING, THE SOVIET LEADERS SEEM TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE
DANGERS OF COMPETITION WILL HAVE TO APPEAR TO BOTH SIDES
TO BE FAR GREATER THAN THEY ARE CURRENTLY PERCEIVED BEFORE
EITHER FEELS SERIOUSLY COMPELLED TO CONSIDER THE CASE FOR
RECONCILIATION.

15. ONE MAJOR INCENTIVE WOULD BE THE PERCEPTION OF A
THREAT FROM AN OUTSIDE POWER, PARTICULARLY THE UNITED
STATES. A US POLICY SEEN IN BOTH CAPITALS AS AGGRESSIVE
OR AS BLATANTLY SEEKING TO WIDEN THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT
WOULD LIKELY PROVIDE THE IMPETUS FOR A REASSESSMENT BY THE
SOVIET LEADERS. AT SUCH A TIME THE SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY
CALCULATE THAT PEKING SAW SIMILAR DANGERS IN THE SITUATION
AND MIGHT BE RESPONSIVE TO EFFORTS TOWARD A RAPID RECON-
CILIATION IN THE FACE OF A COMMON THREAT. SHORT OF THIS,
HOWEVER, THE USSR APPEARS RESIGNED TO CONTINUED CHINESE
HOSTILITY AND DETERMINED TO FRAME POLICIES THAT REDUCE TO
A MINIMUM THE RISKS POSED BY THIS HOSTILITY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE007493
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: INR/RSE: J SONTAG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770012-1124
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770193/baaevbb.tel
Line Count: 270
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 909684de-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3681468
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CHANGED> MCM 20030730
Subject: SOVIET VIEWS ON THE PROSPECT FOR A SINO-SOVIET
TAGS: PINR, PFOR, UR, CH
To: OIC PTC INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/909684de-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009